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Beautiful  
Country  
Beautiful  
People

APPALACHIANS ON THE THRESHOLD





## Beautiful Country Beautiful People

### APPALAGHIANS ON THE THRESHOLD

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### Appalachians Have a Problem: *rigid individualism*

Some say that mass communication and increased travel have turned the people of the United States into a bland, homogenized mix of conformists — persons with similar values, loyalties, and goals.

If you believe this, you've never visited Appalachia.

The term rugged individualism might have been invented to describe the persons native to this mountainous 13-state region. Individualism — the rugged variety — has been admired by Americans since pioneer days. Unfortunately, some kinds of individualism can become rigid, and thus destructive to the individual.

When uniqueness becomes inflexible, it can hinder a person's development and limit his chances for personal fulfillment. We all know the fate of prehistoric creatures whose unique characteristics could not adjust to changed environments.

The story of the Appalachian Adult Basic Education Demonstration Center is the story of an effort to help the people of Appalachia change the characteristics which are blocking their happiness . . . while retaining those which make them such rare flowers, so special, so creative, and so admirable.

Which characteristics of the Appalachian people have made it difficult to bring about constructive change?

Probably the greatest difficulty encountered by social agencies is the people's dogged resistance to working in groups to solve their problems. They don't like it. They don't believe in it. They take an "every man for himself" (or at least every family for itself) attitude — which was valuable and necessary in frontier times — but which makes it almost impossible to develop local leadership today.

They tend to be action people—doers rather than planners. This is an excellent quality in an emergency or crisis, but unfortunate in a situation where, all experts say, productive solutions depend on careful planning and thinking ahead.

Attempts to change traditional ways of doing things are met with resistance and fear. In some situations this is seen as stalwart integrity, sticking to your principles. In others—when attempts to improve sanitary conditions are met with antagonism—it can be interpreted as stubbornness.

Fatalism—a conviction that they have no control over their own lives—is another serious block to change.

“In fact, all the aspects of personality which tend to make the mountaineer unique also tend to make him an anachronism in our interrelated interdependent society,” says Jack Weller in his book *Yesterday's People*.

But these characteristics can be either changed or built upon. (The Appalachian Adult Basic Education Demonstration Center is proving it.) And the human potential in this currently dormant area of America is tremendous. Appalachians need to learn that they have worthwhile abilities, that they can change their own lives and those of their children, that they are not boxed into a life style from which there is no escape.

As they come to realize these things, new job opportunities will open to them, and the Appalachians will work with other Americans to establish new enterprises and thus bring prosperity and hope to the land they love so dearly.

## *What Is the Appalachian Adult Basic Education Demonstration Center and How Can It Change Behavior?*

### **What It Is**

It's a demonstration and research project whose area of concern and responsibility is the region called Appalachia, encompassing parts of 13 states and the isolated white mountain people who live there. It develops and tests programs, materials, facilities, teaching techniques, and educational technology for undereducated adults, and studies the characteristics of the Appalachian people that encourage and hinder change. It acts on the belief that behavioral change begins when undereducated adults develop the basic learning skills.





The AABEDC is essentially a catalyst for improving living through the medium of education, and it hopes to improve adult basic education throughout the nation as a result of its work with the deprived adults and their school systems and agencies in Appalachia.

### **Why a Regional Rather Than a State Center**

People who live in rural areas are hard to reach. Unlike urban ghettos, inhabitants live far apart; roads are poor, often impassable or even nonexistent; public transportation is not available to these isolated spots.

This alone makes social improvement programs difficult to administer. In addition, state leadership in recent years has been pressured into greater concentration on big-city problems. Leadership is weak in Appalachia's local communities. Resistance to cooperative effort is one of the behaviors the AABEDC is trying to change through leadership development.

Hence a regional center — dedicated to helping the silent rural majority in a group of states rather than in one state — is believed at this stage to be the most effective and least costly solution.

Appalachia is not the only part of the United States with large rural populations needing help and leadership. The Indians, rural Mexican-Americans, and rural residents of the Plains States would

all benefit from regional centers working on their unique problems.

There are other benefits to the regional approach. By working through the AABEDC, leaders in the Appalachian states have been able to cooperate in training teachers, developing materials, solving problems. Their successes are not limited to their own locales. Through the facilities of the regional center, news of "what worked for us" spreads through the entire area.

### **What Does the Demonstration Center Do to Change Behavior**

The Center staff has moved up on this problem from a number of different directions, and is grasping it with a variety of tools. Changing human behavior is probably the most difficult of educational goals. It is rarely accomplished quickly, and it usually involves trial and error—experimenting with new approaches and abandoning those that do not work.

As the basic step toward behavioral change in these undereducated adults, the Demonstration Center concentrates on helping them learn to read, write, and work with figures. Analysis of research data emerging from these programs shows that adult involvement in basic education is producing change. As just one instance, it is reducing their anomie—their sense of being ruled by fate rather than having control over their own lives.

### *Specifically*

### *What Does the AABEDC Do?*

#### **I. It tries new techniques on for size**

Testing new approaches to old problems: that is the life purpose of the Center's many demonstration projects, now underway in eleven states. The following are merely samples of their experimental activities:

- How do you recruit students in isolated areas? That was the subject of a two-year study in the extremely isolated northeast section of Georgia. The experiment increased enrollment from 95 to more than 600 persons, and developed 29 adult basic education classes, clearly establishing that paid ABE-related lay recruiters were by far the most effective recruiters and tended to ensure retention of adults in classes (80%).
- Teacher characteristics and their effect on student dropout were studied in a Mississippi project. Only adult education in-service training seemed to make a difference. This project also developed a method for analyzing the effect of teacher attitudes on student attitudes.





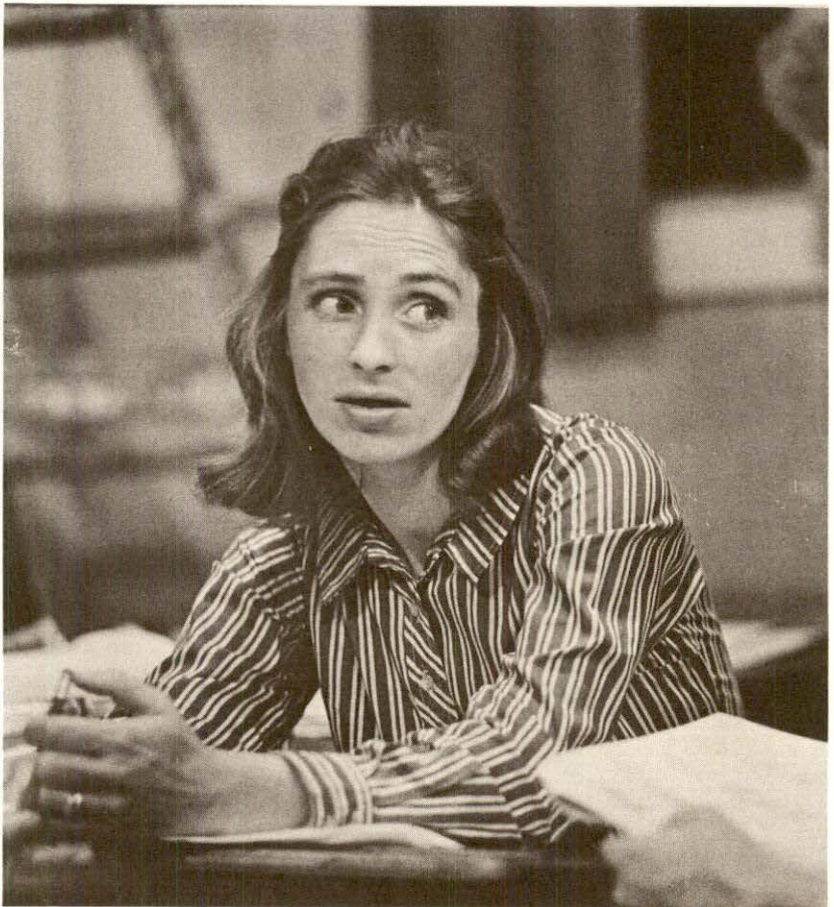
■ When agencies cooperate, the program is more successful. That's the theory. But is it so? Cooperation between agencies is being demonstrated in Kentucky, in a combination traditional classroom and learning laboratory situated in an abandoned U.S. Lock and Dam Site. The local CAP agency transports students by bus. Girls from the Neighborhood Youth Corps provide child care, using Head Start techniques. A follow-up study of 40 of last year's graduates showed 3 in college, 3 in practical nurses training, 17 in vocational training, 8 teacher aides, 1 food service manager, 1 library assistant, 1 carpenter foreman, 1 training for civil service, and 5 obtaining loans for college work.

■ In a highly industrialized county of South Carolina, a two-way communication channel has been set up between employers and the local education agencies. Many job openings exist, but the unemployed are not qualified to fill them. So industrialists are now being told of educational agencies that will train new employees, and educators are kept informed about the kinds of skills the employers need.

■ Some side effects of adult basic education were studied in a West Virginia project. A long range follow-up of 85 graduates revealed

that their education has not only increased their employability, but also broke them free of their habitual immobility. They were more open-minded about moving out of their home communities to seek jobs. Study of a small random sample of school-age children of adult basic education students found a rise in achievement while their parents were in adult basic programs, one-third showing less absenteeism, and one-third showing fewer behavioral problems.

■ Traditional classroom or learning laboratory... which is more effective in adult basic education? A pilot study undertaken by the Ohio demonstration project showed student achievement almost two and a half times greater in learning laboratories. In another experimental study, paraprofessionals used programmed materials to work with homebound students. Student gains as large as four to five years resulted in 100 hours of programmed instruction where massive supplementary materials were made available in the home.

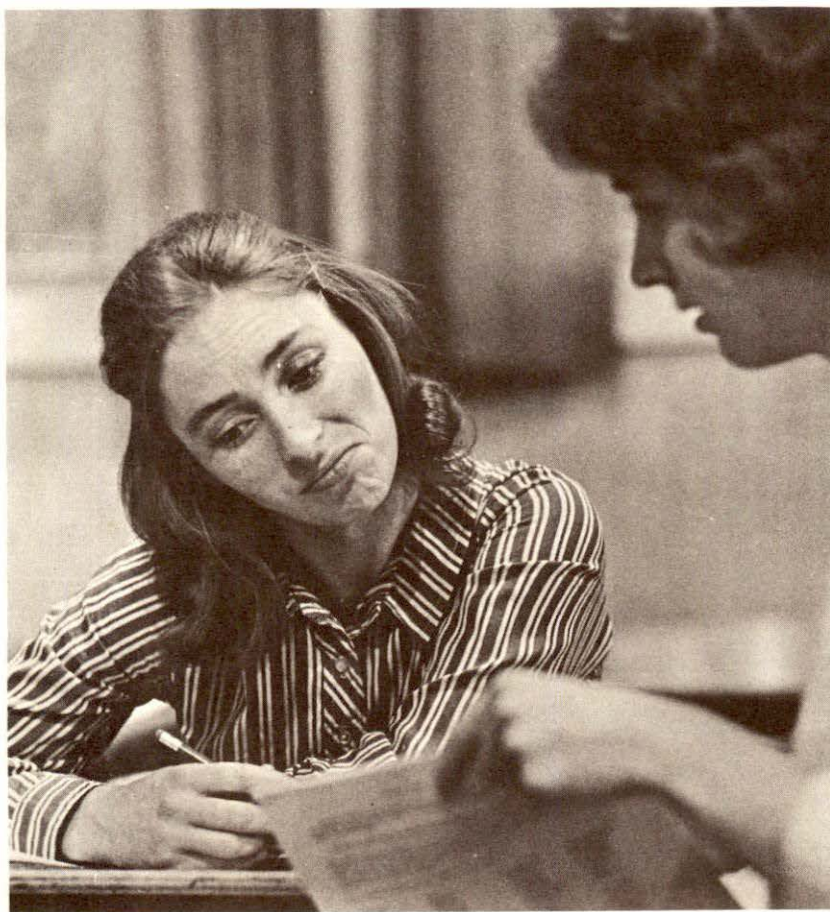




Adults were reached who had never been reached before. Each thoroughly trained paraprofessional worked with 11 to 18 students.

- A film series to help teach mathematics, consumer education, and to teach adults to read through music is being made in Alabama. It will be used in local school systems on video tape recorders. In the same demonstration project, a study was made of the effectiveness of the experimental audio-visual equipment and curricula vs programmed materials in the teaching of reading. The varied audio-visual equipment and program were found less effective in three out of four tests.

- Can beginning reading be taught to adults on film by country and western-style singers such as Johnny Cash? A feasibility study is being made in Tennessee. If such a series is developed, it will be distributed nationally.







- ABE-GED graduates are employed as recruiters and counselors in a county adult basic education effort in Virginia. These "counselor-aides" are given both formal and informal training for the work as part of a career-ladder program. Higher success in recruitment, retention, and placement have been reported.
- The typewriter is being used to motivate adults who are learning to read . . . and its effectiveness as a motivator is the subject of a pilot study in Maryland.
- The activities of a community school with full utilization of school facilities and leadership are usually considered good bait to lure adults into basic education. Whether this theory works in actual practice is the subject of a study in New York State.

## **II. It's up to its neck in research**

As the Demonstration Center coordinates and supervises adult basic education programs in many states, it is in an ideal position to do research on a broad, regional basis.

Fifteen research projects are either actively underway or in the planning stages. They include studies of —

- The relationship between anomie (a sense of control of one's environment) and involvement in adult basic education
- The survey, development, and testing of life-centered mathematics materials
- The relationship between geographic isolation and illiteracy
- The relationship between parental participation in ABE and the school achievement, attendance, and behavior of their children
- A dialect study of the speech patterns in Appalachia, to improve teacher training in communication skills, and to develop better supplementary materials
- A study of the information-seeking behavior of illiterate adults in Appalachia
- The relationship between learning rate and adult anxiety
- Participation of adults in ABE and its impact on total family life in Appalachia
- Goal formation and achievement of Appalachian ABE clients and programs.

## **III. It emphasizes teacher training**

Good teacher training undergirds it all, according to the AABEDC, as it takes an exploratory, experimental approach to the training of teachers, aides, and local leaders. Professional training is done under the auspices of Morehead State University, and in cooperation with other universities, other adult and community education agencies such as the federal institute program and state authori-

ties. As it conducts training programs, it also studies the kinds of persons most effective in working with the adults of Appalachia, and the kinds of training programs needed to prepare them.

#### **IV. It conducts a learning and diagnostic center**

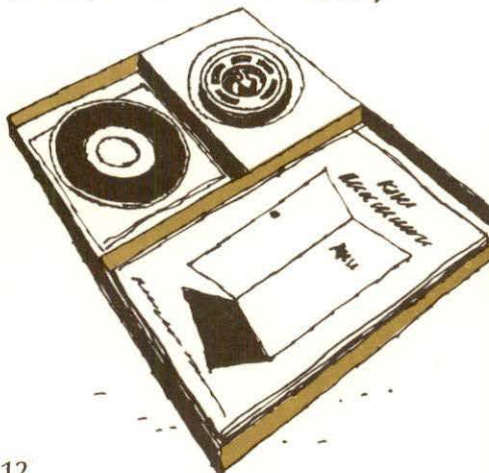
The live nucleus of this 13-state demonstration program is the Learning and Diagnostic Center, located in Morehead State University. In addition to conducting its own adult basic education and teacher training programs, and a video tape recording studio, it is used by the Learning Center staff to analyze and improve instructional materials, gearing them to the needs of different groups and different levels of knowledge. The regional structure enables the AABEDC to field test a variety of curricula and diagnostic instruments in a select, controlled population.

#### **V. It spreads the word**

News of research findings and successful innovations spreads rapidly through the 13-state region via a multi-media communications system. This enables the staff of all the units and projects to put information and discoveries to immediate use. It prevents a successful technique, discovered by a single project in a remote region, from being filed and forgotten. The radio and TV production studios of Morehead State University, including the teacher-training facilities, are used to create and disseminate materials for use in educational and commercial television. Currently, a region-wide recruiting package "ABE Opens the Door" has been produced for distribution throughout Appalachia.



*A.B.E. Recruitment Kit*





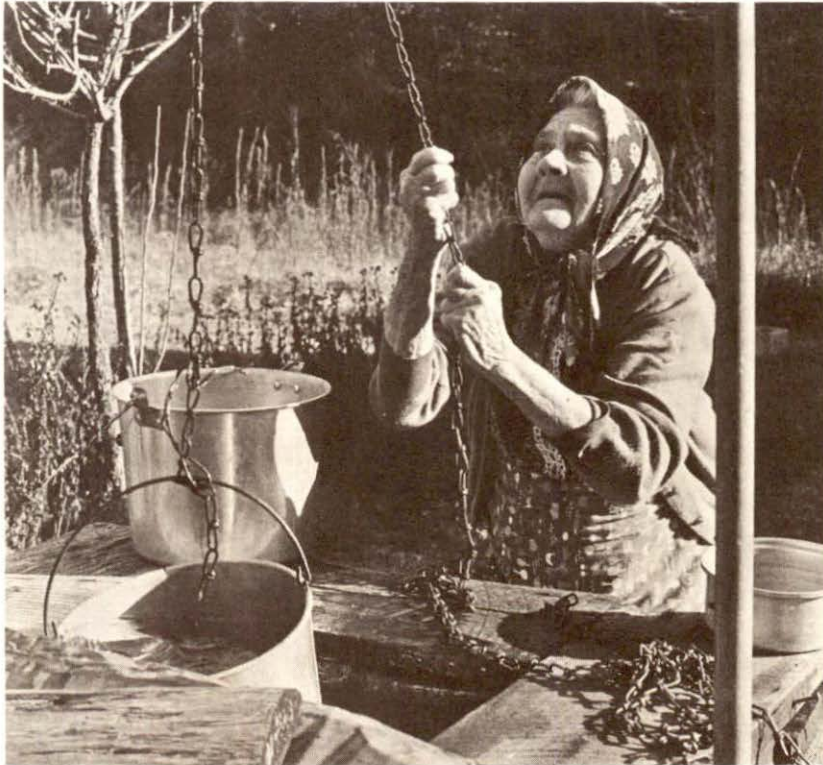
## *WHO RUNS IT?*

At the top of the structure is the Regional Board of Directors. The Board represents each of the 13 states, having two members from each State Advisory Committee, the state director of adult basic education, and other agency representatives.

State Advisory Committees have been set up in 12 of the states. These committees are made up of representatives of agencies serving the poverty-stricken and educationally disadvantaged, plus representatives of business and industry and the Appalachian Regional Commission.

Local Advisory Committees supervise the Demonstration Projects, the field units of AABEDC.

All of these committees are coordinated by the AABEDC professional staff, one of the most experienced and knowledgeable adult education groups in the United States.



## **AABEDC PROFESSIONAL STAFF**

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## **12 Major Components of the Demonstration Center**

Recruitment, Agency Cooperation

Retention

Diagnosis: Testing, Inventory Techniques and Evaluative Processes

Manpower: Identification and Training of

Adult Basic Education Personnel

Materials and Curricula

Methods and Teaching Techniques

Continual and Terminal Counseling

Placement

Follow-up

Use of Volunteers

Business and Industry

Client Representation

Project No.: 8-3-SP-138

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DEMONSTRATION, DEVELOPMENTAL AND RESEARCH PROJECT FOR  
PROGRAMS, MATERIALS, FACILITIES AND EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY  
FOR UNDEREDUCATED ADULTS

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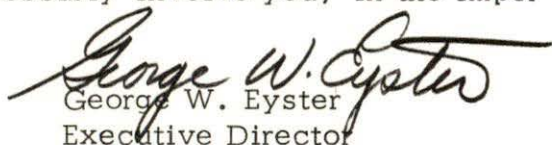


March 1, 1971

Dear Colleague:

We are pleased to be able to share with you our booklet, "Beautiful Country, Beautiful People", which describes the activities of the Appalachian Adult Basic Education Demonstration Center.

Through this publication we wish to acquaint you with the work we are doing on campus, in Eastern Kentucky and throughout the Appalachian region. If you already know about the AABEDC we hope that this booklet will help fill in the informational gaps about our agency. If new to our work, we hope it can introduce, and possibly involve you, in the important undertakings of our project.

  
George W. Eyster  
Executive Director





# APPALACHIA



Ky Col.

~~Miss Faye Belcher~~  
~~Library~~